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SUBJECT: DARFUR: SEPTEMBER 14 AU DITF BRIEFING REPORTS AMIS
TROOP ROTATION ON HOLD

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: According to African Union officials, Sudan has requested that AMIS suspend rotation of peacekeeping troops to Darfur, pending the outcome of the September 18 ministerial-level PSC. The AU confirmed that the Rwandan rotation is on hold, but suggested that the September 16 rotation of South African forces may continue. The AU introduced the AMIS Force Commander, Major General Luke Aprezi of Nigeria, who has previous experience in both UN and African-led peacekeeping operations (UNPROFOR and ECOMOG); Aprezi highlighted the need for intelligence to allow AMIS to be more proactive. According to the AU, security in Darfur deteriorated in the last week, particularly in the north; the GOS continues its armed offensive, including aerial attacks. Canada presented "lessons learned" from the August ambush of a convoy of Rwandan peacekeepers. AU officials confirmed that since that ambush, AMIS and GOS forces have shared responsibility for escorting fuel convoys, despite possible misperception of military collaboration. PAE's request for prepayment should its contract for food services be extended, has raised concern among some partners, and will likely be raised by AU Commissioner Djinnit with the USG in New York. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) On September 14, the African Union Darfur Integrated Task Force (DITF) briefed selected AU partners (US, UK, Canada, EC, NATO, and UN) on political, logistical, and security developments of the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS).

13. (SBU) AU Darfur Integrated Task Force (DITF) Political Advisor Dr. Solomon Gomes began by noting that most DITF officials had gone to New York, in anticipation of the September 18 ministerial-level Peace and Security Council (PSC) meeting on Darfur. Gomes said he hoped the PSC, which had been "gentle" in the past, would take a strong position against the Government of Sudan (GOS). AU Special Representative for Sudan Ambassador Baba Gana Kingibe would attend the PSC; no replacement had been named despite the announcement of his resignation. Commenting on a recent statement issued from Sirte, Libya, that "African leaders" opposed the UN going into Darfur, Gomes said that only Egyptian President Mubarak and Libyan leader Qaddafi opposed UN transition. There was no evidence that any other African leaders had approved the statement; support for transition had been expressed in numerous communiques issued by the AU PSC, Gomes noted. Gomes said he had no information on discussions at the ongoing NAM summit in Havana.

SUDAN SEEKS STOP OF AMIS ROTATIONS

14. (SBU) Gomes confirmed that the AU had received a note verbale from the GOS that "creates complications," as it proposes that rotation of AMIS troops stop until after the September 19 PSC. Both DITF Head Ambassador Ki Doulaye Corentin and AU Peace and Security Commissioner Ambassador Said Djinnit were "aware of the problem," which would be raised at a higher level. Gomes said he would suggest that the AMIS Deputy Head of Mission inform the Sudanese MFA that the note verbale had been received but was "not acceptable." "Serious problems" would result from Sudan continuing to reject transition through December, or continuing to put its own troops into Darfur, he added.

15. (SBU) Representing the AU DITF Military Component, J-5 Plans officer Lieutenant Colonel Fidelis Azinta reported that rotation of the Nigerian battalion, now on the ground, had been completed. The rotation of Rwandan troops, originally scheduled for September 15 and to be conducted with the USG, was now on hold, given the GOS note verbale, Azinta said; Gomes added that the Rwandans awaited the outcome of the September 18 PSC. On the other hand, Gomes said, South Africans "haven't given up" on their anticipated September 16 self-deployment, which he said had "no link" to the September 18 PSC. Newly arrived South Africans could be withdrawn, if AMIS were not extended, he added.

16. (SBU) Contingency plans for withdrawal were now being finalized and would be shared with partners, Gomes said, depending on the outcome of the September 18 PSC. The PSC

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would also be briefed on the new concept of operations (CONOPS) for enhancing AMIS through the addition of two additional battalions (from Rwanda and Nigeria), he added.

NEW FORCE COMMANDER CITE NEED FOR INTEL

17. (SBU) Gomes introduced the new AMIS Force Commander (FC), Major General Luke Aprezi, who previously served with both UNPROFOR and ECOMOG and most recently served as Chief of Operations, Nigerian Armed Forces. In brief remarks, Aprezi said he had some idea of what he was facing, following briefings at AU Headquarters, but wanted to wait until arriving on the ground before making further observations. Aprezi underscored the need to seek cooperation and harmonious relations to move the force forwards.

18. (SBU) Aprezi also highlighted the need for intelligence in order to allow AMIS to be proactive, so as "not to let anyone take the force for granted." Dr. Gomes commented that while other peacekeeping missions had made contingencies for obtaining or purchasing intelligence, AMIS had not, due to budgetary reasons. AMIS now faced a critical need for intelligence, Gomes said, noting that it had a cell within its Joint Operations Center (JOC). Citing reports from Yaounde that Cameroon's military had encountered rebels from Chad and the Central African Republic, Gomes expressed concern that conflict was spreading from Darfur.

19. (SBU) The retired Zambian general appointed to serve as Chief of Staff of the AMIS Forward Joint Mission Headquarters (FJMHQ) should arrive by the weekend, Gomes said. USG advisor to the AMIS J-2 noted that the formation of the Joint Operations Center (JOC) had been blocked by the outgoing Force Commander, as 16 AMIS officers taken from the sector level for the JOC had been returned to the sectors. Gomes said the arrival of the new FC should address this issue.

¶10. (SBU) Colonel Azinta reported a "deterioration" of security in the last seven days. The GOS had a large force on the ground, especially in northern Darfur, to carry out its "security stabilization program," which was "unacceptable to the AU and the international community," Azinta said. AU situation reports reflected that the GOS had launched offensive actions, including air attacks, he added.

¶11. (SBU) Azinta said incidents reported by AMIS MILOB group sites included the following:

-- September 10, Tawila: GOS troops conducted an air attack on Korma, killing or injuring civilians (including two children) and killing 135 animals.

-- September 11, Tawila: GOS offensive action resulted in an influx of new IDPs to Tawila IDP camp, from an area in the north under attack.

-- September 12, Tawila: Janjaweed attacked Tawila IDP camp and stole cattle. Locals alerted the MILOB group site; the AMIS protection force pursued trucks, exchanged fire, killed two attackers, and recovered the stolen livestock.

-- September 13: at 1950, a lone gunman fired on an AMIS vehicle at Kutum airstrip, injuring an AMIS sergeant (struck in the leg); protection force could not react, as the gunman disappeared into a crowd.

-- September 13, Shingeil Tobayi (Sector 1): Locals reported armed raiding of homes, possibly by Janjaweed, following the distribution of food.

¶12. (SBU) Azinta concluded that the situation was neither stable nor calm in northern Darfur (Sectors 1 and 6); other sectors "generally remain calm." Azinta acknowledged that the Jebel Marra slope "sits astride" Sectors 1 and 6, but

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said he could not confirm whether capturing Jebel Marra from the National Redemption Front (NRF) was the GOS's objective. Many attacks had been directed against unarmed civilians, he said, although AMIS could not provide an estimate of civilian casualties. Asked the NRF's reaction, Azinta said the NRF had recaptured a village on September 13 and that SLM forces not associated with Abdel Wahid had joined forces to counter the GOS offensive.

¶13. (SBU) Azinta said morale among AMIS forces was "generally high." AMIS was now responding to challenges and sending a message to the GOS by being proactive and by defending both themselves and local IDPs, he said. Gomes said the preliminary lessons learned report on the August ambush that killed two Rwandan peacekeepers was awaiting review by Commissioner Djinnit, and would be given to FC Aprezi.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM AMBUSH OF RWANDANS

¶14. (SBU) Canada presented an overview of the September 8 report prepared for the AU on "lessons learned" from the August 19 ambush of Rwandan AMIS peacekeepers at Kouma. Among its findings:

-- When attacked, 30 fuel trucks had been protected only by 4 soft vehicles; better to use armored personnel carriers (APCs) to escort convoys;

-- AMIS needs to conduct risk assessments;

-- Better communications is needed: the convoy attacked set off with 7 additional vehicles added at the last moment.

Dr. Gomes noted that rebel representatives attended AMIS briefings at which AMIS convoy movements were discussed; their inclusion in such briefings may have to be revisited,

he said.

GOS AND AMIS ESCORT OF FUEL CONVOYS

¶15. (SBU) Questioned about allegations of AMIS assistance to the GOS, Azinta said AMIS had protested the GOS taking an AMIS fuel tanker by force. The EC noted that the same fuel contractor (Matthews) supplied both AMIS and the GOS, giving rise to possible misperceptions. Gomes said 12 fuel tankers had been emptied of fuel, and were likely in Chad. Gomes added that following the August ambush of the Rwandans, the GOS and the AU had made arrangements so that GOS provided force protection for fuel convoys to El Fasher, and AMIS provided security from El Fasher to three hubs. While he had informed Commissioner Djinnit that this created the impression that AMIS and GOS forces were cooperating, it was operationally necessary and the practice continued.

DARFUR-DARFUR DIALOGUE AND CONSULTATION

¶16. (SBU) Gomes could not confirm whether the AU had appointed a chairman for the DDDC preparatory committee, nor could he provide information on security arrangements for the DDDC, but he said a budget for the dialogue had been prepared. Canada underscored the importance of DDDC participants feeling secure, particularly as the dialogue was one of the last mechanisms available to engage non-signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). Gomes said parties "will have to show something before they earn the right to attend" the DDDC; the dialogue would not be automatically open to all participants. He explained that parties that did not want to sign the DPA nevertheless should honor the cease-fire.

¶17. (SBU) Highlighting the AU's political role in Darfur, Gomes said that coordination between the AU and the UN needed to be discussed in New York. The UN Secretary-General's report and UNSCR 1706 both gave the impression that the AU mission in Sudan ended upon transition to the UN, Gomes said. While the AU's peace-keeping role would end, the AU's political role would not, he noted.

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LOGISTICS: FOOD CONTRACT A CONCERN

¶18. (SBU) The EC observed that while Italy had offered a single flight to transport MREs to Khartoum, additional MREs remained in France.

¶19. (SBU) Asked about a note from U.S. contractor PAE to the AU, regarding arrears owed by the AU on a food contract for AMIS, and requesting prepayment should the contract be extended, Gomes said that Commissioner Djinnit was aware of the issue and would raise it with the USG. (NOTE: Djinnit and other senior AU principals are in New York, and have not yet raised this issue with post. END NOTE.) Azinta said DITF Administration Control and Management Center Chief Commodore Binega Mesfin had observed that any proposed rate increase would be subject to negotiation.

¶20. (SBU) COMMENT: No official explanation was given for the replacement of the AMIS Force Commander, but this was a key recommendation of a recent assessment of AMIS conducted by Canada and the USG, and shared with AU DITF. Major General Aprezi is expected to arrive at AMIS Headquarters by September 17, on the eve of the AU PSC decision on Darfur, suggesting that DITF officials are prepared to maintain the presence of AMIS in Darfur. END COMMENT.
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